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Fact Sheet

Relevancy of Training for Certified Water Works Operators

Why training relevancy is important

Certified water works operators are on the front line of protecting public health by assuring safe and reliable drinking water. The fundamental importance of operator certification and training has been highlighted twice in recent years by serious outbreaks of waterborne illness in Canada that were in part caused by operator failure and could have been averted. In one of these outbreaks there were several deaths, and in both of them thousands of people became ill. To help prevent such disasters, it is very important that operators receive training that is relevant to protecting public health.

All certified water works operators must meet professional growth requirements to remain certified. Most do so by obtaining at least 3.0 relevant continuing education units (CEU) or college credits during each professional growth reporting period.

It is imperative that certified water works operators understand relevancy in order to ensure that they meet their requirements to remain certified. Before signing up for training to help meet their professional growth requirement, operators should always make sure that the training is relevant. Many courses offer CEU or college credit and may be relevant for other professions but not for water works certification purposes.

Types of training that are directly relevant to drinking water systems

To apply toward the water works operator professional growth requirement in Washington State, training must be directly relevant to the operation, maintenance, or management of a water system and have an influence on water quality, water supply, or public health protection. This includes training that expands an operator's expertise in the technical, managerial, or financial operations of a water system. It also includes training related to involving or informing customers about regulatory requirements and the compliance status of the water system.

Examples

- Specific utility management topics such as drinking water regulatory compliance, capacity development, rate setting, financial viability, security, and responding to drinking water emergencies.



HELPING TO ENSURE SAFE AND RELIABLE DRINKING WATER

- Utility-focused safety topics such as safe handling of chlorine, trenching and shoring, and working in confined spaces.
- Water right issues that relate to source water protection and supply.
- Water quality topics such as treatment techniques, water quality monitoring, and maintaining records of test results.
- Operational subjects such as pump maintenance and repair, cross connection control, and backflow prevention.
- Specialized computer software applications used in utility operation.
- Topics related to promoting water conservation and improving water use efficiency.

Types of training that are *not* directly relevant

The types of training not directly relevant are usually too general in nature or are only indirectly related to water system operations. Sometimes they are more directly related to some other field of work.

Examples

- General management topics such as time management, supervision, personnel issues, and communicating with difficult people.
- General safety topics such as first aid, CPR, defensive driving, and flagging.
- Endangered Species Act topics related to wildlife protection or recovery.
- Basic computer skills, programming, and troubleshooting.
- Wastewater training.
- Most HAZMAT training.
- Road and street maintenance.
- Pesticide application.
- General plumbing or electrical code courses targeted to electricians and/or plumbers.

Often there are questions around opportunities such as committee meeting attendance, association functions, conventions, etc. as to whether they are relevant. If these types of activities focus primarily on information sharing purposes, rather than true training for certified water works operators, they would not be seen as relevant training.

For more information on course relevancy and CEU assignment

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